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ABSTRACT

The win-win approach, as discussed in negotiating and bargaining theory, addresses a way of thinking in which a win for one party does not necessarily mean a loss for the other--both parties are able to win. The win-win approach can be applied to the evaluation of public-speaking skills, where numerous ways exist of evaluating students and formulating grades that can benefit both students and instructors. Three factors influence the evaluation process: the evaluator; the training and experience of the evaluator; and the method and result of the evaluation. Peer evaluation can promote a win-win situation by increasing student feedback and understanding of the evaluation process. Evaluator training is necessary to provide consistency among grades. Several evaluation techniques facilitate the win-win situation, including: (1) videotaping speeches for student self-critiques; and (2) "Triplespeak," a peer-evaluation approach which divides classes into three sections, allowing students to give their speeches three different times to three different groups. Students and instructors "win" when the evaluation process provides challenges and opportunities for improvement, reflects the degree of mastery, and discriminates between the highest and lowest achievers. (Nine references are attached.) (MM)

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MAKING THE GRADE: A WIN-WIN APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION OF PUBLIC-SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

The win-win approach, as discussed in negotiating and bargaining theory, addresses a way of thinking in which a win for one party does not necessarily mean a loss for the other; thus, both parties are able to win. Too often students "lose" in the evaluation process because the true purpose of the evaluation is overlooked. This can be even more frustrating for a student when the assignment requires a presentation or use of public-speaking skills. Instructors in many disciplines face the dilemma of effectively evaluating students on presentations and speeches. Both students and instructors "win" when the evaluation process provides challenges and opportunities for improvement, reflects the degree of mastery, and discriminates between the highest and lowest achievers. This paper examines evaluation techniques of public-speaking skills that may lead to a win-win situation.

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RUNNING HEAD: MAKING THE GRADE

MAKING THE GRADE: A Win-Win Approach to the Evaluation of Public-Speaking Skills

The ability to effectively organize, prepare, and present a speech or presentation is a skill that most, if not all, students must confront at some time in their academic careers. This means that instructors must face the difficult task of accurately, fairly, and effectively evaluating these students. How often have you, as an instructor, asked yourself: Am I providing enough valuable feedback? Does the grade I assign to students really indicate their ability or progress? Is the grade I give students going to discourage them, or challenge them to improve? Is there any other way the evaluation could be more effective? These are just a few of the numerous issues that instructors face when evaluating an assignment that requires public-speaking skills.

The win-win approach is an idea borrowed from negotiation and bargaining theory that addresses a non zero-sum way of thinking, opposite of a non zero-sum way of thinking in which a gain for one party means a loss for the other party (Pruitt and Rubin 1986, 18). In non zero-sum thinking, neither party views their gain as neccessarily meaning a loss for the other party; thus, both parties are able to win.

In some cases, the evaluation process may lead to a "win-lose" situation, with students on the losing side. One criticism of evaluation, pointed out by Terwilliger (1971, 9), is that students learn to work for "artificial rewards rather than true understanding;" but, he believes ". . .the fault lies not with the notion that evaluation should occur but instead with the way in which the evaluation is performed." This may be especially true when the evaluation

is of a public-speaking assignment. Grades are often based on a one-time chance to present a speech without opportunity for improvement. Instructors, however, with limited class time available, are often pressured to assign grades that distinguish between the A, B, and C students. The method chosen to evaluate students may enable instructors to "win," while students "lose" the opportunity to really learn and master public-speaking skills. This doesn't have to be the case. There are numerous ways of evaluating students and formulating grades that can benefit **both** students and instructors; hence, the idea behind the win-win approach to the evaluation of public-speaking skills.

THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

To determine the most effective methods of evaluation, it is necessary first to determine the purpose of the evaluation. Ahman and Glock (1971) define four steps of the instructor's role in formal education: (1) Identify objectives and know what the pupil behavior will be when the objectives are achieved. (2) Determine educational experiences necessary to achieve the objectives. (3) Know your students so you can design experiences for them and their varied interests and aptitudes. (4) Evaluate the degree to which the desired changes in pupil behavior have occurred. All four of these steps necessitate some form of assessment or evalution.

Another approach to the purpose of evaluating students was stated by Terwilliger (1971). He stated three reasons for judging student achievement: (1) To determine whether students have acquired specific

skills or knowledge considered essential by the instructor; (2) To diagnose strengths and weaknesses revealed by a pattern of achievement; (3) To determine achievement of students with reference to others who had comparable instruction. These three reasons *for* evaluating students can be seen as methods *of* evaluating students as well. These methods are often combined so that final grades reflect an average of a group of scores assigned by the instructor, and often a curve or ranking of students is established to assure an acceptable distribution of grades. This may not be the most effective way of using the evaluation process, especially when evaluating public-speaking skills.

The purpose of evaluating a particular assignment is an important consideration in determining the most effective method(s) to achieve the win-win outcome. As instructors, we assign grades to students on speeches and presentations for the following three reasons: (1) To determine to what extent students have learned or mastered the skill of preparing and presenting a speech and to compare them with other students in the course; (2) To determine the strengths and weaknesses of students, to provide a baseline for future growth and achievement, and to offer suggestions for improvement; (3) To communicate to others (educational institutions, parents, and prospective employers), as well as to the students themselves, what those achievements, strengths, and weaknesses are. Instructors "win" when they provide a grade or evaluation that they feel is an accurate assessment of ability and progress in comparison with what is expected or required and are able to discriminate between the highest and lowest achievers. Students "win" when the evaluation process challenges them and

provides opportunities for them to improve, increases their confidence in existing skills, recognizes strengths and weaknesses, accurately indicates their ability in relation to their peers or what is expected, and reflects a degree of mastery. As instructors, we should strive to find the evaluation techniques that most effectively lead to a win-win situation.

THE EVALUATOR

The first factor to consider is **who** does the evaluating. The traditional and probably most frequently used method of evaluation is the method in which only the instructor evaluates, writes comments, and assigns a grade or rank. Many would argue that in the classroom the instructor is the authority, and is therefore most qualified to make an accurate and fair judgment about a student's performance. However, there are several limitations to this method. First of all, instructors are frequently pressured to provide immediate feedback to students and still provide quality feedback and accurate evaluations. During evaluation of a speech or presentation, at any one moment, instructors are forced to decide whether to concentrate on the presentation or organize and write a valuable comment for the speaker.

To alleviate this problem, Behnke and King (1984) have devised a system of **computerized speech criticism**. Their system implements the use of computers that store a variety of comments and criticisms that can be accessed with a keystroke. Alternate forms of the same comment can even be recorded to allow for greater variety. This system allows instructors to spend more time listening and analyzing and less time worrying about

writing a comment. Behnke and King (1984, 175) found a very favorable response among students and instructors who used this system in a basic speech course. One student reported, "I really like getting this much feedback. Before when I gave speeches, the comments I got back were sketchy, short, and incomplete." One of the instructors commented, "I spent much more time looking at and listening to the speakers."

The system is intriguing despite the possible problems with its implementation. Many institutions may not be able to afford to furnish all of their instructors with computers as well as find the time and resources to train them in the use of the computerized system. Additionally, many students may feel that the use of a machine in evaluation diminishes the personal contact involved in making a presentation. However, the advantage of being able to concentrate on the performance and still provide valuable comments to the speaker may be worth the time and expense involved in setting up the system.

An additional weakness with the instructor-only method of evaluation is that students receive only one person's opinion and comments on their presentation. Possibly several instructors could group classes together for speeches, creating an atmosphere more similar to real public-speaking situations, and involving additional opinions and evaluations.

Another alternative to the instructor-only method of evaluation is the **peer-evaluation** technique. Peer evaluation is a system where students critique and evaluate each other providing increased feedback to speakers, a less subjective evaluation, and an opportunity for students to become more familiar with the criteria used to evaluate a speech. Peer evaluation can be

used in addition to, or in place of, instructor evaluation; however, it is probably most effective in combination with instructor evaluation. According to Weaver and Cotrell (1986, 25), "Peer evaluation emphasizes skills, encourages involvement, focuses on learning, establishes a reference, promotes excellence, provides increased feedback, fosters attendance, and teaches responsibility." In the system used by Weaver in the large, basic speech-communication course at Bowling Green State University, students evaluate each other on critique forms that they have been trained to use. Before they begin this, they are instructed on the purpose and function of the peer-evaluation system. Because students use the forms several times in evaluating other speakers, and are evaluated by the same criteria themselves, students learn by internalizing, or making the criteria a part of their attitude and belief about effective public speaking, as a result of the extensive use of the forms (Weaver and Cotrell 1986, 26).

While this system allows students to play a part in the grading process and assists the instructor in providing comments to the speakers, it is not without its weaknesses. A potential difficulty with a peer-evaluation system is determining how to assign grades when there may be a tendency for students to evaluate each other extremely high or low. Rather than basing grades on traditional percentages or a bell-shaped curve, Weaver (1986, 35) bases grades on the range of average scores students received in each individual class. For example, if all the average scores that students received ranged from 23 - 36 (out of 42 possible points), than the middle range of scores are average for that class. If the middle score was 32, then from the middle score (32) down, students receive a C. (No D's or F's are necessarily

given unless warranted by extremely low scores.) Those students above the middle receive a B, and those (if any) who are extremely above the middle, receive A's. The only problem with this system is that if you have different students evaluating different speakers then you cannot be certain that a person who had an average score of 30 would not have had a 39 with different students evaluating. (Of course the same situation could occur with a different instructor evaluating as well.) Unless you have all students evaluating each other, determining grades from average scores may not be completely fair or accurate. Being fair and accurate could become time consuming. Think of the paperwork involved for an instructor who must average and then rank the scores obtained **for** twenty students evaluated **by** twenty students!

A better way of using a peer-evaluation system, perhaps, would be for instructors to take student comments and evaluations into consideration when determining the grade, perhaps count them as a percentage of the grade. Instructors could average the grade given by students with their own grade and base the final grade on that average number. Weaver (1986) allows the individual instructors to have some control over how much peer evaluation counts. Based on the instructor's assessments, if students have proven they can be fair, accurate, and discriminating in critiquing their peers then their evaluations may count for 50% of the grade. If, however, students have failed to be fair, accurate, and discriminating, evaluation may be counted less. Zeman (1986) developed a numerical scoring system that uses a combination of instructor evaluations, peer evaluations, and peer rankings to determine a grade. Again, however, unless you have all students

evaluating each student, grades may not be fair or accurate. Instructors could simply eye-ball the comments and scores given by peers and if they differ significantly from theirs, adjust the grade accordingly. This still gives students an input in the grading process, but they may be less motivated to participate.

Another concern is the accuracy of students as evaluators. Are students qualified to evaluate each other fairly and accurately? Will all the students understand the criteria used to evaluate and interpret that criteria the same way? How do you decide a grade based on ten to twenty evaluations? Weaver (1986, 25) recognizes that this system involves risk and a degree of trust in students; "But, by using carefully constructed evaluation instruments, in structured classroom situations, with students providing exact assessments of their class members' work, peer evaluation can be controlled and precise."

How do you know students are "providing exact assessments of their class members' work?" Perhaps the instrument is the key to successful peer evaluation. The instrument, or critique form, should meet the following criteria: (1) It must be carefully constructed so that criteria match the assignment and what students have been told they are expected to do. (2) It must be easy to understand and use, and contain no ambiguity. (3) It must be carefully and thoroughly explained so that each student uses it the same way. Unless these criteria are met, it may not be possible for **all** students to provide "exact assessments" of speakers. Not only is all of this very difficult to do, but it may not be possible.

There are no simple or completely accurate ways of using peer evaluation. However, there are benefits of such a system that could move

instructors toward a win-win approach to evaluation. Students win by receiving increased feedback and an opportunity to be a part of the evaluation process, therefore gaining a better understanding of the criteria used to evaluate. Instructors win by having the assistance of students in providing feedback and formulating grades. These benefits could be well worth the time involved in properly devising such a system.

EVALUATOR TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

Many basic courses have performance sections that meet outside of the lecture time. These sections, as well as many basic courses, are frequently run by untrained graduate assistants or beginning instructors. A possible cause of the inconsistency among grades assigned may be the **experience and training of the evaluators**. Whether it is an instructor, graduate assistant, or peer who does the evaluating may not be as important as their level of experience and training in evaluation.

Lewis and Larsen tested the hypothesis that the amount of experience judges have influences agreement between their evaluations, and that training can increase agreement between judges. Results demonstrated that ". . .training was extremely effective for increasing agreement, especially among experienced subjects [judges]. Without training, inexperienced subjects showed more agreement than experienced subjects" (1980, 8). To be certain that all judges are using the same criteria and interpreting the criteria the same way it is necessary to consider the experience level of the judges. When evaluating speakers, judges with experience may each evaluate

using different criteria; and, while inexperienced judges may all apply one standard, they have little or no ability to determine the quality of the speakers (Lewis and Larsen 1980, 9). It is no wonder that students complain that their friends are getting A's in the same course, but with a different instructor, while they are receiving C's. There needs to be greater consistency between instructors of multi-section courses, as well as among student evaluators if using a peer-evaluation system. Training evaluators is necessary before they begin evaluating speakers. Otherwise, students are being cheated of a chance for fair and accurate evaluations, and instructors are not accurately distinguishing between the high and low achievers. In these circumstances, nobody wins.

FACILITATING STUDENT PROGRESS

Perhaps a more necessary consideration than who does the evaluating is the method and result of the evaluation. When a student prepares and practices a speech only to receive some comments and a grade based on one performance there is little opportunity for growth and improvement. Some learning and improvement may occur if a second speech is presented, however, why should that speech be a completely different speech if the student has not yet perfected the first one? A more individualized system of presentation and evaluation would provide increased opportunity for growth and improvement. Students who are not as skilled in organization or delivery may benefit from working with the same speech until it reaches an acceptable level. Students, on the other hand, who are

successful the first time may be stifled unless they are able to move on to another speech assignment that presents more of a challenge.

In addition to ability, there are other factors that may affect a student's performance on a given day. Students get sick or have bad days and such conditions may prevent even the most brilliant speaker from presenting an effective speech. It would not be fair to base a grade on such an unrepresentative presentation. However, extremely nervous students may use the excuse of illness for days, even weeks, until they feel able to present their speech. A system of evaluation is needed that allows for bad days and yet does not provide opportunity for procrastination.

A system devised by Dubner and Mills (1984) called **Triplespeak** may provide such a system. Dubner and Mills (1984, 168) created Triplespeak because of the complaint they observed often made by students: "If only I could do my speech over again, I know I'd do a much better job." In Triplespeak, classes are divided into three sections of students, and each speaker gives their first speech, a three minute extemporaneous speech, to each section at at different time. Three speakers are speaking at one time, each to a different group, thus a system of peer evaluation must be used.

Using Triplespeak may create an excellent win-win situation, benefiting the student in several ways: (1) It helps in reducing apprehension as students speak to smaller sections of the class and several speeches can be going on simultaneously. (2) It facilitates an environment of improvement as students utilize feedback in presenting the speech a second and third time. (3) Students recognize the importance of their feedback to the speakers and play more active roles as audience members (Dubner and Mills 1984).

However, two disadvantages of Triplespeak are apparent. First, students speak to a small group of peers rather than to a large audience, more characteristic of a true public-speaking situation. The second disadvantage is the inability of instructors to listen to each student's speech entirely. Since several speeches are being presented at once, the instructor must circulate between all three at once and will be unable to make an accurate evaluation based only on a portion of the speech. While Triplespeak may not be appropriate for the evaluation of all speaking assignments, it could be beneficial as an opening exercise to prepare students for additional public-speaking assignments.

An alternative to Triplespeak may be to have students repeat their speeches, if necessary, correcting initial weaknesses until they are ready to move on to a new speech. Speeches could still be presented to the whole class at one time and could be evaluated by either instructors, peers, or both. Although such a plan would require considerable time, it would prevent students from losing the opportunity to grow and improve.

Another method of facilitating improvement is **videotaping speeches for student self-critiques.** This allows students to play a role in their own evaluation and improvement After students have analyzed the positive and negative aspects of their speech or presentation, they have the opportunity to make changes and improvements and present the speech a second time. A grade could be based on an average of the two performances or just the second performance.

However, this may not be as successful without instructor feedback as well. Miles (1981) noted that when students view a videotape of their

speech, they most commonly note aspects of delivery that need improvement while paying less attention to the content and organization of the speech. Instructors, as well as peer evaluators, could play a vital role in pointing out strengths and weaknesses to speakers, who could then view the videotape to verify the comments. This would provide students with more opportunity to learn from the experience.

Nothing worth-while is accomplished without difficulties, and videotaping has several. They include: (1) sacrificing the time required to set up and operate the video equipment; (2) locating someone willing and able to operate the video equipment; (3) accessing the tapes for later viewing; and (4) unforseeable malfunctions with the tape or equipment that cause some students to miss the opportunity to be taped or view their tape. However, instructors who choose to deal with these difficulties may find it beneficial. A second viewing of the speech could be possible, allowing additional comments and suggestions to be made to the student. The student and instructor could even view the tape together to jointly analyze the speech. This again is very time consuming and only fair if a videotape is available for all students. Despite the limitations of using videotape, the benefits of involving students in evaluation and providing opportunity for improvement is what the win-win approach to evaluation is all about.

THE WIN-WIN APPROACH

As noted by Ahmen and Glock (1971), educators have a responsibility to create educational experiences that will challenge and assist students in

demonstrating expected behavior when educational objectives have been achieved, and to determine to what extent individual students have achieved these objectives. This responsibility requires some system of evaluating students be used. To provide students with the opportunity to "win" in the evaluation process, a combination of several of the above mentioned ideas could be used. More specifically, students should become involved in the evaluation process through peer evaluation; sufficient time should be taken to train instructors, as well as peer evaluators, in evaluation; care should be taken in the explanation of criteria and creation of critique forms; and students should have the opportunity to repeat and improve their speeches, thus learning from the experience.

Employing these methods may result in an evaluation process that does more than just determine to what extent students have achieved objectives or acquired certain skills. Involving peers in the evaluation process may provide increased awareness of the criteria necessary for effective public speaking in addition to providing increased feedback to students (Weaver and Cotrell 1986). Careful and extensive training of evaluators could result in increased consistency and competency among the evaluators (Lewis and Larsen 1980). Finally, providing students with the opportunity or requirement to repeat and improve their speeches may create a more challenging and productive educational experience as well as provide a more accurate assessment of achievement. In this sense, instructors "win" because they are able to accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of students, provide adequate and helpful feedback, and more accurately discriminate between the high and low achievers. Students "win" because

they receive feedback from both their instructor and their peers, their ability or achievement is more accurately assessed, and they are able to improve and learn from the experience of making a presentation or speech. A win-win situation will be created in which students do not lose a valuable educational experience and instructors are able to successfully complete their task.

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